

# Cultural Development, Adult Education and Local Communities

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## 1. 1990's cultural values — from a global perspective

### (a) The value of sustainable development.

Cultural development before the 1970s was for economic development and emphasized national or cultural identity but in the present, the 1990s, cultural development will aim for survival for mankind and a sustainable development of planet earth.

Since the industrial revolution in England started in the latter part of 18th century, economic development has been supported by the values associated with mass production and mass consumption. This development offered us a pleasant and enjoyably high standard of living.

When we became aware of the true costs, we discovered this lifestyle entailed public hazard, suffering for many, and a deteriorating natural eco-system.

The document *Earth graven menace* which was issued at the Toronto Summit in 1988 emphasized that environmental considerations should be taken into account in all the processes of economic decision making in order for human beings and the earth to

survive. It also supported the concept of sustainable development.

Valuing the earth and desiring to protect it leads to the concept of supporting natural ecosystems and encouraging a lifestyle based on conservation of energy and resources. Consuming less, recycling and reusing become important, rather than a constant drive to produce.

#### **(b) Living together with nature**

The drive for economic development created prosperity and stability for some sections of the world community but many deprived peoples share little of this prosperity. Society has also been segregated from nature.

At the present time the values which have promoted modernization through struggle against and conquest of nature face a thick wall between preservation of the natural environment and sustainable development.

The United Nations Human Environment Conference warns, in its statements on the human environment, that if mankind continues to use the power to change the environment carelessly, various regions on the earth will have polluted water, defiled air and irrecoverable resources will be lost to the earth's eco-system.

Japanese traditional thought, based on Zen Buddhism, promotes a lifestyle based on "living together with nature" which is familiar to and enjoyed by many.

It is seen in Haiku (short poems of seventeen letters), Tanka (short poems of thirty one letters), flower arrangement, drawing, and in the tea ceremony. It could enrich contemporary ideas about the value of the earth.

#### **(c) "Seihin" value**

What constitutes abundance or wealth? What is quality of life? These questions result from our prosperity. In the process of economic development, a separation between the reality of the consumer society and emotional satisfaction has occurred.

The Japanese people do not feel the reality of enrichment. Before, they wanted the rich, American way of life symbolised by ownership of cars and refrigerators. Now

they are seeking a new “Japanese” way of life.

The 21st century will be the age of “kokoro” which could be interpreted in English as “heart, mind, spirit, mentality or humanity”. It means changing a lifestyle with materialism as its core value to one where quality of life is paramount.

In the past it has been said that the enjoyment and promotion of “culture” was just as amusement and the preserve of women. However, now with weekly two day holidays for workers and five days’ schooling for children people’s free time has increased.

Japanese people are seeking to change their lifestyles, to live with more autonomy, individual fulfilment and cultural self-expression based on their own original ideas and ability.

Last autumn, a book entitled *Thought of Seihin*, written by Koji Nakano was published and it continues to be a best seller.

The book describes the lifestyle of a priest of Zen Buddhism who, though he had a minimal standard of living, developed a high quality of thought. The book’s ideas warn against the social climate of materialism.

The lifestyle of “Seihin” is a way of living unconcerned with profit, greed or flattery, but content with poverty.

The people most influenced by these ideas are hard working senior workers in their fifties who are retiring soon.

It is interesting that people in Europe and the USA take an opposite direction to Japanese. They work for wealth in their retirement.

#### **(d) The value of sharing**

What family we were born into was ordained by fate and there was no choice in the matter. This accident or chance decided whether we live in a developing or in an industrial country.

Assistance for development was started by Anglo-Saxon volunteers, people who were inspired by humanism in the nineteen sixties.

However the philosophy of contemporary development, the valuing of living together and sharing the wealth of the earth and even the vision of our common future is different from that of the nineteen sixties or seventies.

The security of all humanity, its rights to fundamental freedoms and human dignity are seen as basic, in order for us all to live as human beings.

Respect for human rights and democracy, independence for and equality among men and women, whether they be aged people, handicapped or of a different race require from us a lifestyle emphasising sharing and living together. Also it means joint participation and cooperation in creating social change which moves towards that new direction.

#### **(e) Interculturalism**

The end of the cold war and the economic gap between the South and the North brought about the independence of many countries. It also caused an international migration of large populations and the formation of multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-linguistic societies.

It threatened national identity, cultural identity, and produced linguistic problems as well as educational problems.

Considering such diversity of culture in a community, we should recognize a relationship of culture not international but intercultural. In World War II, Hitler and Japanese leaders used “culture” and education for political ends. We should create the political meaning of culture.

The 43rd Session of the *International Conference on Education* in Geneva held in September, 1992 was sponsored by UNESCO. It had the theme of “The contribution of education to cultural development”. The *United Nations Conference on Environment and Development* (UNCED, Rio de Janeiro) searched for new common value and norms. They suggested:

- 1) sustainable development and values
- 2) enrichment through access to culture and learning

## 2. Adult Education and Cultural development from different perspectives

### (a) Environmental Issues

At present, what is meant by “the quality of life” and a good life style in changing. With the improvement of living standards and the spread of higher education in Japan today, people have begun to seek not only material affluence but spiritual and personal fulfilment as well.

Japanese people who love nature take walks in the fields for pleasure and to benefit their health. Others learn history and culture. There are many groups interested in such things as herbs, bird watching, or the observation of astronomy. Those who are interested in archaeology participate in excavation activities as volunteers and learn about ancient culture. The Environmental Agency of the Japanese Government set up a Data Bank in 1991 to collect information related to learning about the environment and to diffuse it to support environmental learning.

### (b) Development of human rights

(Cultural rights and democratization)

The ethnic cultures of international migrants and aborigines are rich, but this is not often recognized. Cultures may be ransacked for commercial gain.

The mutual understanding and preservation of cultures, and participation in cultural activities helps individuals express themselves in an enriching and fulfilling way.

We should not only learn our own culture but also learn another culture and be bilingual or multi-lingual.

This is especially true for migrants who may need to reassimilate the culture and customs of their home lands when they return.

(Decentralization of culture)

Culture is not only regarded as something which is concentrated in cities. “Culture” exists wherever people live. However it is influenced by the “cultural-education industry”.

The Ministry of Home Affairs of the Japanese Government developed the “Home Town Creation Project” in which they offered a share of 100 million yen to municipalities. The purpose was to allow their citizens to create new community through joint planning and participation.

The report as at November 1992 shows that in 3,223 municipalities (98.9% of the total) 10,693 projects are being executed.

Among the projects concerned with culture are the following :

• Create image of local community	2,867 project
• Training including cultural animator	2,322
• Promotion of cultural tourism	1,936
• Transmission and utilization of traditional culture	1,307
• Promotion and development of new culture of home town	1,100

#### **(c) Women's issues**

Women have taken a roles as transmitters and disseminators of culture. For women, cultural activities are more popular than they are with men.

Women, especially house wives, who have much more free time as a result of the reduction of work needed in the home, participate in cultural activities for enjoyment and fulfilment of their life.

Traditional Japanese cultural activities such as the tea ceremony, flower arrangement and calligraphy were a kind of “education for marriage” for girls.

The Iye Moto system (master family system) still exists and this offers the achievement of a degree and a qualification as master or teacher. However, decision making members of the cultural organizations are overwhelmingly male.

On the culturally negative side in the sex industry which commercializes the female sex. In particular, poor women from South Asian countries who have no vocational training have fallen victims to this industry. Many of these women go to industrial countries beyond the border and they are forced to work as bar hostesses or prostitutes.

#### **(d) Aged adults**

Local traditional cultures are supported by aged adults and women. These people participate in a variety of cultural activities such as folk crafts, calligraphy and performing arts. They simultaneously practice the local culture and transmit it to the next generation.

### **3. Adult education, cultural development and social movement**

Cultural development exists in the activities of grass roots people in local communities. With the improvement of living standards and the spread of higher education in Japan today, people have begun to seek not only material affluence but spiritual and personal fulfilment as well.

Cultural activities as a self-expression have been expanding, from learning about them, to practical activities, and from these activities to networking beyond the local communities.

Local citizens can enjoy the outstanding works of performing artists or choose to participate themselves. The activities of cultural groups, circles and organizations play a very important role in cultural development. They make it possible for everyone to participate in a wide range of activities. Popular participation in cultural activities and movements are shown in Fig. 1.

Local communities, by taking advantage of distinctive culture, are important in making people's lives comfortable and worth living.

**Fig. 1**                      **Popular Participation in Cultural Activities**

Category	Number of amateurs (approx.)	Description
Music (Chorus)	1.5 million	Includes PTA (Parents and Teachers Association) — organized choruses, community choruses of housewives, and choruses presenting year-end performances of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony.
(Instrumental music)	0.8 million	Chiefly wind-instrument performers in high school brass bands.
Fine Arts Appreciation	10 million	Creative activity is extremely diverse and forums for its exhibition are numerous ; a great deal of amateur art is presented for display in some form.
Artists	5 million	
Calligraphy	over 10 million	Instruction is provided by private teachers and alternative education organizations. In recent years calligraphy is increasingly popular among women and the elderly.
Drama	0.5 million	Includes members of high school clubs, and theater groups organized at workplaces, local citizens' groups, and young people's groups.
Folk song and dance	5 million	Majority are older adults and senior citizens. Efforts should be made to familiarize young people with these traditions.
Tea ceremony	6 million	Instruction is provided by a number of old family run schools including the Omotesenke and Urasenke schools.
Flower arrangement	3 million	Mainly persons receiving instruction by teachers of the three major family run schools, Ikenobo, Ohara, and Sogetsu. There are over 1,000 schools of this kind.
Game of <i>go</i>	10 million	Strategy game has recently attracted an increasing number of young people.
Game of <i>shogi</i>	23 million	Chess-like strategy game that enjoys wide popularity.
<i>Gin'ei</i> (poem reciting)	4 million	Recitation of classical or Chinese-style poems taught by many schools. The major schools, with a membership of 3 million, form the Japan Ginkin Shibu Association.

Sources : Cultural Affairs and Administration in Japan (Agency for Cultural Affairs) and other surveys



A variety of local measures have been undertaken in response to local needs in recent years, and most of these measures seek to further not only local economic development but the reaffirmation and revival of traditions rooted in local areas. This trend in which culture is made the pivot of measures for the improvement of the local environment and the establishment of the regional cultural identity, is laudable.

In Ina town, Saitama Prefecture, 30 km north from Tokyo, the Saitama Prefectural Citizen's activity Centre is the first of its kind in Japan to promote its citizen's own activities. These activities include voluntary social welfare work and learning activities undertaken by women, youths, and senior citizens. They offer audio-visual learning materials and equipment as well as study courses in audio-visual skills.

It operates as follows :

- offers references and consultation services for each activity
- offers learning opportunities for leaders of the community and also offers many lecture courses to promote every citizen's lifelong learning
- functions as clearing house for information on prefectural citizen's activities and also offers research into the development and promotion of these activities

A nation wide Cultural Festival is held every year to bring together amateurs in many fields, providing them with the opportunity to meet, compete, demonstrate their skills, and establish contact with others of similar interests. Its aim is to heighten interest and participation in cultural activities, helping to stimulate new and original creative endeavours.

Large-scale cultural events have also been held in other local areas in recent years, but awareness is growing that development of local communities depends on the nurturing of folk and other traditional performing arts and handicrafts as well as the preservation of arts and crafts which are unique to specific local areas.

Municipalities are supporting the development of local cultural groups, circles and organizations which play a central role in strengthening cultural activities among local citizens.

#### 4. The municipality, a space for Adult Education and cultural development

Administration for cultural development supports the cultural environment and the cultural activities undertaken by the citizens.

##### (a) Cultural development in cultural activities

The role of local government cultural policy is to support and assist spontaneous and voluntary cultural activities, to cultivate the conditions under which citizens benefit from and enjoy culture. They will do this by assisting individuals and private organizations as much as possible, alleviating imbalances in the allocation of resources.

Specific cultural roles and programs at local level are outlined below :

1. General improvement of the cultural infrastructure
  - a. Gathering and dissemination of information on culture
  - b. Support and encouragement for cultural groups and organizations
  - c. Improvement of the physical infrastructure of cultural facilities
  - d. Support of professional artists and other persons who carry on cultural traditions
2. Expansion of opportunities for popular participation in and promotion of culture in local areas
  - a. Implementation of cultural programs of various kinds such as cultural festivals and other local activities
  - b. Promotion of programs which bring outstanding performing arts and other events to local areas
  - c. Promotion of various locally unique cultural activities sponsored by municipal areas
3. Preservation and utilization of cultural properties
  - a. Protection, repair and preservation of cultural properties for the enrichment of popular life
4. Promotion of international cultural exchanges
  - a. Creation and development of new forms of culture through contact and

exchanges with other culture

b. Cultural contribution to the world

In preceding years, municipalities poured their resources into the construction of civic centres, museums and various exhibition halls. Now efforts should be shifted to training professional staff in those facilities, invigorating volunteer activities and strengthening the cooperation among cultural groups, circles and organizations. Thereby making it possible for those facilities to be used to give local citizens opportunities to enjoy fine works of performing arts and to become cultural centres in the daily lives of the local people.

**(b) Cultural developments in administration**

Since 1978 culturalizing of administration has been promoted by the Cultural Agency of the Japanese Government. In the Saitama Prefectural Government, the whole administration was reviewed from cultural perspectives, that is in the light of humanity (peace, thoughtfulness), locality (symbolic value, familiarity, relation to local history), creativity (originality, crafts) and beauty.

In February 1992, Saitama Prefectural Government held a series of symposium, lecture meetings and mini-concerts with the theme of *Town formation through culture*".

## 5. Future tasks of adult education and cultural development

In conclusion, the following problems should be pointed out as future tasks of adult education in Japan.

- (a) Development of systems to organize volunteers willing to devote time and talents to artistic activities
- (b) Training cultural promoters in the managing of artistic and cultural activities
- (c) Creating efficient liaison systems to link artists and arts organizations with their sponsors
- (d) Encouragement of industrial donations

**Reference :**

*Cultural policy in Japan — Current Situation and Future Issues 1992*, Agency for Cultural Affairs, Japanese Government